

RTf 02/03 1727 U.S. study refutes global warming fears

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NEW YORK, Feb 3 (Reuter) - Despite a warm U.S. winter and a rash of pounding rains this year from California to Europe, a new study asserts there is no hard evidence to signal a warming of the earth's **atmosphere** or **greenhouse** effect.

Only slight global warming has occurred in the last 100 years and there is no sign of it producing more hurricanes, tornadoes or other extreme climatic changes, Accu-Weather Inc said in a report for the Global **Climate** Coalition, a business trade association seeking a voice in scientific research.

But the study said these natural disasters will likely continue at the same intensity and frequency as in the past.

"We have not found convincing evidence to support the hypothesis that extreme weather events, presumed to be associated with global warming, are already increasing," the report said.

It cites two main reasons for greater attention to severe weather: More people now live in areas formerly sparsely or even uninhabited and the media is now able to quickly report news of extreme weather from nearly anywhere in the world.

"This contributes to the illusion of an increase in these events," the report said. The study comes a week before 150 nations gather here at a U.N. conference on **climate** change.

Accu-Weather also argued that human activity does not appear to be a significant factor even in the significant long-term changes in the earth's climate that do occur.

The **greenhouse** effect describes the theory of how atmospheric gases, including pollutants and cloud cover, trap visible radiation from the sun, limiting the earth's ability to reflect this as infrared radiation back into space.

This slowing of the exchange between solar radiation and infrared radiation from the earth's surface results in a slow warming of the planet's atmosphere and is popularly blamed for apparent changes in the **climate**.

The study said global air temperatures have increased only 0.45 degrees Celsius (about one degree Fahrenheit) over the past century and much "of the observed temperature increase...occurred before the rise in **greenhouse** gases."

"Both theoretical arguments and observational data show that hurricane frequency is not increasing, the number of violent tornadoes is not increasing and temperature and precipitation extremes are not more common now than they were 50 to 100 years ago," the study said.

The study was authored by Norman MacDonald and Joseph Sobel.

In Los Angeles, for example, five monthly rainfall record-highs from 1878 through 1993 occurred before this century, with the heaviest annual total rainfall in 1884, the study said.

Also in Los Angeles, the greatest number of months with rainfall greater than seven inches were from 1930 to 1939 and the total for the five previous decades was 20, versus 19 in the most recent five decades, it said.

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